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Dec. 8, 1976

Meeting with Mr. Korvadlov

Mr. Korvadlov, Representative in Argentina of the American Jewish Committee

Mr. Charles W. Bray, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

Ms. Yvonne Thayer, Political Officer

PLACE: U. S. Embassy

COPIES TO: AMB, DCN, ARA-Mr. Bray

Mr. Korvadlov is a fifth generation Argentine, his forebears having immigrated from Russia. He is well-connected and well informed. He speaks English.

Mr. Korvadlov began by describing the seriousness of the subversive and terrorist threat in Argentina. The terrorist problem in Argentina, he said, was always far worse than that in Chile and Uruguay. Terrorists here had far more time to organize their movement. Many were trained in Cuba and North Korea. Peron himself directed and supported the anti-military movement--both left and right--from his exile in Madrid, where many of the Montoneros went for money and instructions. Terrorist groups had considerable funds with which to buy material and, Korvadlov stressed, persons, too. The base was exceedingly strong, as witnessed by the acts of internal sabotage against police headquarters and infiltration of the police and military. The power of the movement necessitated a strong response from the government security forces, which GOA was taking. In answer to my question about terrorist links with Moscow and Peking, Korvadlov said the groups all shared the revolutionary "purification" ideology and that there were links with Cuba, the European movement, etc. He cited the refugees from neighboring countries as sympathetic participants in the "movement" and said persons from the Palestine Liberation Group had also appeared in Argentina.

As to the situation of Jews in Argentina, Korvadlov said that anti-Semitic manifestations are not an exclusive problem but rather a facet of a more general and complex human rights problem. The Catholics have been attacked far more than the Jews, have been arrested, harmed and even assassinated, and yet no one from outside complains, he said. The fascist element has always existed in Argentina and is strong among certain groups in the military. Where Jews have been taken in anti-subversive campaigns, swastikas and Nazi slogans have been scribbled on the walls. However, Korvadlov said, in most of those cases there has been evidence that the person or member of the family has had some connection

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with a subversive organization. Jews are not being singled out for persecution as Jews, although they are being affected in the anti-guerrilla effort. Korvadlov said that anti-Semitic literature was still being published despite a weak government ban, but pointed out that "word must have filtered down" because it was not nearly as available or so prominently displayed as before the ban. He said "it had disappeared from the streets."

Asked about the "blandos" and "duros," Korvadlov said the liberals were in the Casa Rosada; the hardliners were with the troops, mentioning Suarez Mason, Menendez and other corps commanders. He said the Air Force were reactionary, fascists and that he was convinced some Air Force and other military elements were financing the anti-Semitic and other Nazi publications appearing in Argentina. The Navy, he said, tends to be more democratic, more "cultivated." He had high regard for Massera, Commander in Chief of the Navy, who he said was realistic and moderate. Massera is among the few, he said, who understand that the US interest in human rights comes from deep, sincere and widespread humanitarian concern and is not part of an international conspiracy to defame Argentina. Specifically, the liberals were Videla, Viola and Massera and their immediate circle. Korvadlov pointedly excluded Secretary of the Presidency Villarreal who, he said, was insincere and a hardliner. (For that reason he also expressed reservation about Ricardo Yofre who will talk about everything frankly but who is closely connected to Villarreal.) The differences and jealousy between the three Armed Forces are causing considerable strain, Korvadlov said, and it is necessary for the Argentines (and the US) to support the moderate and liberal elements in the government. For his part, he said he was encouraging his circle and contacts to support Videla's group.

Returning to the human rights question, I asked what specific steps the Argentine government could take to improve the human rights situation. With no hesitation, Korvadlov said: 1) Inform the Argentine people of the names and numbers of detainees, and the places where people are being detained; 2) Bring persons suspected of subversive crimes to trial; even to military courts, if necessary; 3) Arrest and punish those in the "para-legal" squads responsible for excesses, disappearances, torture, etc. I told Mr. Korvadlov confidentially that I had stressed to government officials I had met two steps that the Argentine government could take to alleviate concern over human rights violations in Argentina--publish a list of the detained and punish persons guilty of excesses. Korvadlov said he was tremendously pleased to hear that and thanked me.

I then described the depth of concern by sincere and right-meaning persons in the US and explained US law linking military aid and IDB votes to human rights performance. I asked whether US sanctions against Argentina would help improve the situation and demonstrate support for the moderates. Korvadlov said to the contrary, it would probably help the hardline, fascist element. Ideologically, Korvadlov said, the hardline right-wingers share certain attitudes in common with the leftists, one being anti-American sentiment. Should the US hit Argentina hard with sanctions, right-wing forces who hold strong nationalistic, anti-imperialist views, would use the sanctions to exploit anti-American sentiment. They would blame Communist influences in the US for attacking Argentina and would be strengthened in a bid for power. That, he said, would

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be disastrous for Argentina. One Cuba on the continent was enough, he said.

When I asked for clarification of that remark, he said that the taking of power by the hardline would probably result in much more repression and even more severe economic hardship which would tend to push the people toward the left. Repressive revolution breeds revolutions, he said.

When asked what the US could or should do, Korvadlov replied, "What you are doing." He suggested more contacts between American military and the present military government, more visits of congressmen and concerned Americans to Argentina and of Argentines to the US to reduce the suspicion and lack of information and understanding between the two peoples.

He then remarked that Father Drinan's approach--and that of the Amnesty International visit--was terrible. Drinan, he said, was like "a businessman." At a private dinner party, Korvadlov related, Father Drinan announced that if the GOA produced a list of the detained, he would see to it that military aid was doubled.

Asked how the Argentine people view the present government, Korvadlov said the people don't like military governments. They are tired of revolutions and tired of military governments. That was the point of bringing back Peron and trying to get that issue over with and get the country back on a civilian government track. It was a disastrous failure. The country has never known such corruption and violence as under the Peronist government. Korvadlov stressed that para-legal excesses were worse under the Peronists, particularly Lopez Rega. He noted that the atrocity cases described by leftist lawyers in Cong. Fraser's subcommittee hearings all happened under the former government. Horrible things, the disappearance of whole families, killings and violence continued to happen under the military government, but were not as bad as under Lopez Rega and were beginning to diminish.

Although the people dislike military governments, Argentines in general do not oppose the government's anti-subversion efforts. Argentines do not involve themselves, do not have feelings either way about the drive, even excesses against suspected terrorists. They figure that if a person is killed or disappeared, somehow he was involved in the guerrilla activities, Korvadlov said.

I thanked Mr. Korvadlov for sharing his time and views and invited him to discuss matters again when he travels to the United States. He accepted and expressed his appreciation for my interest. He said he had no objection to my discussing our conversation with David Geller of the AJC, and that he would take me up on my offer to bring back a letter to Mr. Geller as his mail was being opened.

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